

Hocart—Lau Islands, Fiji

159

band will send a whale's tooth for her to return and her relatives will make ⁵⁴³ a feast to send her back with; this feast is called the conveyance (*i haukau*).

A woman becomes of the clan of her husband. Only women are trans-⁶¹⁴ferred; men stay. In practice a woman works with her husband's clan, but upon being asked to what clan she belongs, she will name that in which she was born. On her husband's death a woman returns to her original clan. Sometimes a man goes to live in his wife's country. It is then said that "she brought him over."

The wife goes to the home of her parents to give birth to her children,⁸⁴⁴ and usually remains with them for a year or longer after a child is born. During this time she may not resume cohabitation with her husband. It is said that a Fijian woman will die if she is pregnant three times, each time before the previous child is strong. A Fijian widow whose wife has died in childbirth is looked upon askance. If a woman contracts the abdominal disease called *ndrami ni tangane*, which is caused by the husband⁷⁵³ cohabiting too soon after childbirth, and if she dies in consequence people will dissuade girls from marrying him.

BIRTH CEREMONIAL

A first child, called a new child (*ngone vou*) is the occasion for much⁸⁴³ more ceremony than attends the birth of subsequent children. There is no feast when conception first appears, but the mother stays in the house, for a number of months given variously as three, four, five, six, or eight; she does not cut her hair or bathe. She is taken care of during her pregnancy lest the foetus move and miscarry. This is done for the eldest child only. After eight months her people make an oven on the shore and she goes to fish. A feast called the bathing of the pregnant mother (*i silisili ni mbukete*) is prepared, at which the fish she catches are roasted and served, called *i tatavu*. The people of Levuka called this feast "causing to appear" (*vakavotu*). The prospective mother then cuts her hair and throws it away, after which she may resume hard work.

A pregnant woman may not anoint another person's eyes with medicine⁷⁵³ as it causes soreness of the eyes.

Except for the child of the High Chief a man may be present at the⁸⁴⁴ birth, but usually only the father is. It is forbidden to announce the approach of travail in the village or the labor will be difficult. The after-birth is buried. The newborn child is bathed. The child is not again bathed until the fourth day.

844 Of old everyone knew if a boy was born because the ladies sang a song
533 called *thongge* (*thongge* is a bird that sits on a stone and cries u, u).

[539] Ko *thongge* ni sa roaroa"
E vuka, mai ka mai toka
Mai tekuru toka a ndomora,
Ka lutu ka ndengu; "mm"
Ka ndrendre a *thongge*: 'eiai'.

Thongge when it is morning flies
hither and perches; its voice
coos, then drops and hums
"Mm," and the *thongge* laughs:
"E i ai i"

There is no song for a girl. Nowadays there is no joking (*vakatasuasua*)
at birth.

846 Both, the mother and the child are rubbed with oil and turmeric powder
that "the milk may smell it and be plentiful." Oiling the mother is no
longer practiced, and so *kulakula*, a disease in which the skin turns red, is
common. Candlenut is pressed on the child's lips to make it vomit, that
the evil thing may come out which was in its inside when it was born,
853 that it may be clean. It is fed with coconut juice; the coconut is baked,
chewed, and the juice spat on to a clean piece of bark cloth and given to
the child to suck. If the child wants to vomit they rub its lips with a
China banana to make it vomit outright. When the mother has milk they
set aside the coconut.

846 When the news is known ladies come in numbers to stay with the
mother ten to twenty nights. This assembly is called *sóngone*. The father
has to provide food for them daily.

At some time, it is not clear when, the father comes to kiss his child
and rejoice over it. If the mother be a lady, bark cloth and as much as
twenty or thirty mats are brought for her to lie upon. Of the two sides,
father's and mother's, one provides the couch for the mother, the other
for the child. On the day of the birth (occasionally a day or two after)
both sides provide a big feast which is taken to the house where the
mother is lying in. The assembly of women has the disposal of the feast.
The father also makes a raw feast called *mba*, taro stems. Formerly they
carried the baskets slung on muskets; nowadays on spades; these are
called "the carrying sticks of the taro stems" and were given with the taro
to the mother's side.

After four nights the women go to fish "to make free the nursing
mother." Until that time all food from the sea is forbidden (p. 163).
A big feast is then prepared called *isilisili ndraru*, which means "to wash
away the ashes," or to "wash in ashes." The two sides hold a potlatch
in which each side takes its gifts to the house of the other. This is called
"dragging backwards and forwards" (*veiyaravaki*). Whatever the number
of gifts brought from one side, the other will bring an equal amount.

"The word roaroa is not Lauan.

757 the affected arm. The leech gave a pillow and a mat to the Tongan woman who taught
her. The disease may be produced by witchcraft.

757 *Lolokumete*.—All the organs of the body pain; sometimes internal discharges occur,
which are fatal; sometimes external pus does not appear until after four or five months.
It can be produced by witchcraft.

If a person is ill with this disease and the owner of the cure cannot attend, he
will say, "Go and tell the patient I cannot go. If it is my disease, when you get
there he will find relief; if it is not mine he will not be relieved." As he speaks,
the patient recovers. The leech also touches and so knows whether it is his disease.

TREATMENT FOR PREGNANCY AND BIRTH ²³

349 Pregnancy is called *mbukete*. Medicines (*wai*) to produce children are
827 called *wai ni luvua*; in some of them the *vativati* fern is used. "It varies,"
says one wise woman "in the case of abdominal pains. Some women who
have no children merely 'bathe' (*sili*) [p. 162] in order to turn the uterus
the right way, because hard work such as fishing and carrying burdens turns
the path of the child. The test [? efficiency: *i vakandinandina*] is my hand."
After this treatment the woman may use a medicine called *wai ni nda*.

Scrape one stick each of *waleanggio* and *warowaro*; wrap the scrapings in the
reticulum of a coconut palm, soak in water, squeeze; give to drink. If the remedy
fails, the following is tried: scrape the bark off a branch of lemon tree, make an in-
fusion, and give to the patient to drink; cut up fine a leaf of *makola* and with it rub
the belly; this is the ointment. Only the wife drinks.

347 A foetus is in the early stages described as "blood." A distinction is
843 made between abortions which are called *lutundra* (fallen as blood) and
miscarriages, described as "the child has fallen." In Mba I was told the
first term was used when the foetus was anything up to five months old.

5-7 Abortion is procured, but details are hard to obtain, as the practice is
now a criminal offence. It is called "causing to fall," also "child-pricking,"
"pricking in the belly." These terms sufficiently express the method. For-
merly it was very common. The people of Wathiwathi used to destroy the
children of all their women who married into Tumbou so that they should
have no *vasu*, that is sister's sons (p. 40) to be a burden upon them.

344 After eight months pregnancy a woman is given a slippery medicine
called *wai ni kuita kumbe*, octopus of the atlantoid membrane. The disease
appears "in the path of the child." It makes the membrane hard and
spreads round the waist.²⁴ The medicine makes it easy to detach the mem-
brane and for the child to be born.

Treatment.—Scrape together one stick of *ronga* and one of *etuetu*, make an in-
fusion for the patient to drink.

²³ For the medical terms of this chapter I am indebted to Dr. W. MacDougall.

²⁴ The membrane gets hard in parts and is liable to stick in consequence of syphilis. Dr. B. G. Corney writes that he has never met with a case of syphilis in a native Fijian; and there is no authentic case on record. Adhesion of the placenta may, he thinks, be the consequence of yaws which is a close relation of syphilis.

Hocart—Lau Islands, Fiji

169

When the placenta, or "seat of the child" as it is called, appears the midwife anoints her hand with oil, rubs the membrane and finally detaches it carefully. A person who does not know pulls and tears it, and if the membrane is torn the mother dies. The umbilical cord is bandaged and cut off with scissors; formerly it was not bandaged and a bamboo knife was used.

The following cure is used if a woman bears a child and her belly aches:

First, the leech uses a test medicine consisting of an infusion made with four leaves of *vativati* which is given to drink and used to rub the belly. The prohibitions connected with it are sweet food and sea water. The patient is eased, then has tremendous pains, then feels easy again. The leech is then informed that the patient is better and supplies the substance of the cure: one stem of *vorula*, and two shoots of reeds, one tuber of *vativati*, four leaves of *vativati* made into an infusion and drunk. This is repeated four days after which the patient bathes.

The length of the confinement depends on the time of baptism; the mother lies in till then, it may be for months. She is covered with a blanket. Her diet consists of taro stems because it is soft food. The mother eats three or four times a day and twice at night to make the milk abundant. She may not eat pig or sweet food for one or two months till the child is strong lest the mother contract *ndranu*. She may not eat food from the sea for four days, or drink coconut for some time.

Treatment for travail (*vai ni taratara*):

Many leaves of *ale*, and some of *se ni toa* and lemon leaves; when the woman is in travail pound them together, strain them in the usual way and give it her to drink. The *Hibiscus* is used because its juice is viscous, in order that the child may slip. If parturition is hard they continue giving medicine. If these medicines fail, after two nights recourse is made to a spirit-expelling Tahitian medicine (*vai vakataiti*).

POSSESSION

A very popular class of remedies is that called *taiti* remedies. They are known to have been introduced by the Tahitian missionaries, hence the name. They are now used to expel spirits, though one wise woman says this is not the right meaning. "The cause of *taiti*," says Poasa, "is the souls of the dead or the ancestor spirits." If a spirit hits a man so that he does not know his soul, he is *taiti*. Sometimes before he is in sight, the patient declares the leech is coming, and refuses to have him, saying "the place smells bad," referring to the medicine; he struggles. When the leech arrives, the patient tries to escape. As he is held down, he calls out the names of great grandparents, or forefathers, or Tutumatua, or the Wind Women. I witnessed a case of this nature: A boy was seized with pains in the stomach and was delirious; a spirit was said to be eating him. The boy recognized only one man; and complained the spirit had pinched him. A pupil of Ratu, the Levuka man who leads the "Children of Water" came

843 of a *taiwatawai* woman among the fishers. The woman must not cut her hair lest her strength be sapped. After one hundred days the woman is no longer a source of danger, and is in a state called *kunekune*. Her hair is cut for the first time since she has become pregnant, she bathes in the sea, and takes part in the communal net fishing for the feast which is provided by the relatives of the expectant couple. After fishing, the pregnant woman is rubbed with oil and dressed in her best kilt.

[184] On Fulanga no ceremony is held at the beginning of a first pregnancy, but the *i vaka votu ni ngone* is held after the first one hundred days of the first pregnancy of a married woman. It marks the woman's change of status to *kunekune*. The *vaka votu* ceremonies are held only for a woman's first pregnancy to mark the conception of her *ulu matua* (first-born), but the tabus are observed for all pregnancies.

Both parents observe certain tabus throughout the pregnancy to protect the foetus from harm and insure its growth. They abstain from eating any kind of fish which has been cut into pieces before being cooked, lest the child be born with a disease called *manaka na ika tava*. They must also abstain from eating the following sea foods: *vethu*, *kai ndawa*, *turu*, *lailai vai*, *yalewa matua*, *ndambe*, *ulumburu*, and *lolo* (sea eel) lest the foetus be injured.

CHILDBIRTH⁵

844 On the day of birth and for two or three days after birth the mother and child are visited by relatives from the mother's and father's clans. The relatives bring small gifts of roasted ripe coconuts and mats, tapa, or oil. The gifts are presented without ceremony and are received by the paternal grandmother. They are kept by the child's parents.

For at least four nights after the birth a group of five to ten female relatives from both the father's and the mother's sides sleep in the house with the mother and child. This group is called the *songone* or *tonitoni*. When Makarete of Saumua clan, Tokalau, gave birth to a child, the *songone* consisted of the child's maternal grandmother, the maternal aunt, the paternal grandfather's sister, the paternal granduncle's daughter, the paternal aunt, and the paternal uncle's daughter. The child's father must feed the *songone* which stays from four to ten nights depending on his resources.

On the fourth day after birth a ceremony called *i silisili ndrau* or *vaka-mbongiva* is held. The young mother bathes in the sea for the first time since the birth. She is accompanied by her own mother or other near relatives. The *songone* go fishing to secure sea food for a small feast provided for them by the father. On this day the midwife, if she is not a close relative, is presented with property such as tapa or mats. The tapa in which the newborn infant was wrapped at birth is removed for the first time, and the child is

⁵ For details concerning childbirth in Lau, see 23, pp. 27-32.

843 the body of the new born infant will be covered with sores. They also abstain from eating certain types of sea food lest the foetus be injured. In case of a miscarriage the foetus is kept two nights and then buried in the village cemetery without ceremony.

842 Most of the natives know no contraceptives. The women of Mothe, however, say that if a woman does not want a child she goes to a female doctor who takes her into the lagoon and by manipulating the uterus is able to prevent her from conceiving. When she wishes a child she returns to the medicine woman who, by means of counter-manipulation, replaces the uterus into normal position. Informants say that the withdrawal practise is also known as a means of preventing conception.

847 The natives say that abortion is common among unmarried girls on islands like Mothe where standards of morality are lax. According to informants, it is accomplished between the second and fifth months. Three methods are known: pricking by the insertion of a blade of sharp, stiff grass; hard labor such as carrying heavy loads, jumping, or splitting wood; and drinking an infusion of herbs prescribed by a medicine woman.

844 Childbirth takes place in the sleeping house. No man is present unless the birth is unusually difficult, when the husband occasionally helps. An attempt is made to keep the labor secret in the village and to keep children out of the house. If the labor is prolonged, however, the children of the village gather and watch. As soon as the infant is born they are allowed to enter the house.

[424] When the pains begin the woman in labor bathes in the house. Her mother, mother-in-law, or grandmother acts as midwife and gives her a medicine to facilitate delivery. The recipe for this medicine is an inherited or purchased secret, carefully guarded by the owner. The best midwife on Kambara makes it of beaten hibiscus bark placed in a coconut reticulum bag and steeped in water. A skilled midwife deter-

A FIJIAN IS BORN

31

mines by touch whether the unborn child is correctly placed. 844
If not she manipulates it by massage into the proper position
at the beginning of labor.

In a normal delivery the woman in labor sits with legs apart
and knees slightly bent on a flat stone covered with barkcloth.
She supports herself by propping her arms against the
mat behind her, and she is held from behind by one
of the attendant women. The midwife sits in front of her
and slowly rubs her abdomen. If the delivery is difficult the 845
woman lies on her back. In cases of prolonged labor a medicine
woman known for her skill and success in midwifery is
called in from the village or from a neighboring village. She
takes charge of the delivery and administers her own brand of
medicine.

A difficult birth or subsequent complications are believed to
be the result of broken tabus on the part of the mother or
father. It is usually assumed by the men of the husband's clan
that his wife has committed adultery. Instead of consolation,
therefore, she receives reproaches from her husband's male
relatives. The women, on the other hand, are sympathetic
for they all agree that adultery does not influence the process
of birth;

The midwife catches the infant as he emerges. If he is short 844
of breath she blows water from her mouth into his face, or
she gives a cup of water to the mother and massages the um-
bilical cord gently with thumb and index finger. If the
mother is faint the midwife gives her "medicine to restore
her breath", made according to her private recipe. When the
child is breathing regularly the umbilical cord is cut by the
mother's mother or the midwife. This was formerly done
with a shell or a bamboo knife. The method, introduced by [177]
the government, of cutting the cord with a pair of scissors and
tying it with a piece of string, is used occasionally. An old
Fulanga woman thinks that the modern method of tying the
cord is injurious because the bad blood cannot flow away. As

844 soon as the child is born the mother is given a second drink of medicine to bring forth the afterbirth. If it does not appear the mother's abdomen is pressed and the cord is pulled.

The newborn infant is held over a bowl of luke warm water and washed by the midwife or the grandmother. He is rubbed with powdered mangrove root. He is wrapped in white barkcloth so that only his face is exposed, and is held by the grandmother until he falls asleep. A child's bed, composed of a pile of baby mats and soft barkcloth, is prepared. Then the infant is placed "on the mat", that is, he is put on the pile.

846 After the delivery, while still sitting on the stone, the mother is washed with fresh water. Then she lies down on a new mat. She is rubbed with powdered mangrove root and covered with a sheet of barkcloth. She does not bathe in the sea for four days and remains quiet from five to ten days. She eats the roasted flesh of ripe coconut. The natives say she must not eat the flesh from the pointed end, however, because that flesh will poke into her stomach and cause pain. She drinks much coconut milk, but the pointed end of the nut must first be taken off, otherwise the baby will vomit. Also she must not eat salt.

853 Until the mother's milk appears the baby is usually fed roasted ripe coconut flesh. The flesh is chewed by the grandmother or the mother and spat into a piece of white barkcloth. The wad is dipped in warm water and given to the infant to suck. Babies are also fed the juice of sugar cane. Warm powdered mangrove root is applied to the breasts of a woman confined for the first time, to facilitate the flow of milk.

844 The afterbirth and cord are wrapped in the piece of barkcloth on which the birth took place, and buried by the husband or the midwife at the threshold of a door of the house. According to an old woman of Kambara, this is to give the child "good breath". A woman of Fulanga said it was so buried to be stepped upon but she did not know why.

000 If the child is born dead the body is kept near the mother